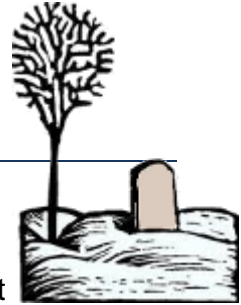


“Remains of a Marriage”

Reading Comprehension – Short Stories

Directions: Read the story. Then answer the questions below.



“Leave it.”

Kelsey could not begin to **fathom** what she was hearing. In fact, a part of her began to feel she was in some sort of dream, unable to emerge to wakefulness.

Even the contractor appeared **flabbergasted**. His mouth stayed in a half-open position, like a marionette waiting for its strings to be tugged.

“Yes. Leave it,” Robert said again. He was speaking to the **notion** that someone in the room had asked him to clarify his words. No one had, but Robert had understood the silence.

What were the chances that an Indian burial ground would be found on the bucolic site where Robert and Kelsey had chosen to build their dream home? Why in the world would Robert not want to have the remains carted away, thought Kelsey. The last thing they needed were Indian poltergeists meandering around their home while the two of them were trying to renovate their marriage.

Kelsey, usually **deferential** to her husband, knew that now was the time to make her position heard.

She tried to **cajole** Robert from the direction he was heading. “Sweetheart,” she whinnied. “We don’t want to build on a site with human remains. It would be irreverent to the dead.”

Immediately, she saw contempt in Robert’s eyes; it was a subtle reminder of how he often viewed her as superficial and self-absorbed.

“What would be irreverent,” said Robert, his voice dripping with condescension, “would be to **desecrate** these Native graves and move them from their final resting place. Remember the culture.”

No, Kelsey did not “remember the culture.” She could care less about the culture. However, Robert, the history professor, was obviously enthralled by the contractor’s findings. He had an innate way of understanding other cultures and other people that amazed Kelsey. He did not have that gift with her.

But something inside Kelsey said this was too much. She believed wholeheartedly in ghosts and could not imagine a life of them haunting her, rattling her cupboards, and shaking her floorboards.

Kelsey had an unnerving sensation that big problems were ahead.

Questions:

- 1) Why can't Kelsey **fathom** what her husband says at the beginning of the passage?
- A. She could not hear what Robert said.
 - B. She could not believe what he said.
 - C. She had not yet seen the remains.
 - D. She could not think of a retort to his comment.
- 2) Which is the best synonym for **flabbergasted**?
- A. dumbfounded
 - B. intuitive
 - C. querulous
 - D. tactful
- 3) What is the term given to the comparison of the contractor to a marionette?
- A. an allusion, meaning a figure of speech making casual reference to a literary figure
 - B. an analogy, meaning an extended comparison showing the similarities between two things
 - C. a denotation, meaning the literal definition of a word
 - D. a hyperbole, meaning a gross exaggeration
- 4) "*He was speaking to the **notion** that someone in the room had asked him to clarify his words.*"
- ▼ Choose the best way to rewrite the above sentence.
- A. He was speaking as if he had asked himself to clarify his words.
 - B. He was speaking as if the contractor or Kelsey had asked him to clarify his words.
 - C. He was speaking as if he heard a question but was not sure who asked it.
 - D. He was speaking as if a ghost in the room had asked him to clarify his words.
- 5) Why is the title of this passage ironic?
- A. Nothing remains of the marriage.
 - B. It is not clear Robert and Kelsey are married.
 - C. Remains have been found on the property.
 - D. Kelsey and Robert are having trouble with their marriage.
- 6) What can be said about the house Robert and Kelsey are planning to build?
- ▼ Check all that are correct.
- A. It will be haunted.
 - B. It will be in the city.
 - C. Kelsey considers it their dream house.
 - D. It will be in the country.

Questions (continued):

7) If Kelsey had chosen to be **deferential** to her husband, what would she have most likely said?

- A. "Good idea."
- B. "Don't be silly."
- C. "I'll leave you."
- D. "I love you."

8) *"She tried to **cajole** Robert from the direction he was heading."*

▼ Choose the best way to rewrite the above sentence.

- A. She tried to compromise with Robert.
- B. She tried to force Robert from the direction he was heading.
- C. She tried to gently prod Robert from the direction he was heading.
- D. She tried to give Robert veiled threats about the direction he was heading.

9) Which is the best antonym for **desecrate** ?

- A. honor
- B. excavate
- C. defile
- D. criticize

10) What does the reader learn about Kelsey and Robert's marriage?

- A. It seems busy.
- B. It seems blissful.
- C. It seems strained.
- D. It seems good-natured.

11) What about Robert seems to keep him from wanting to move the gravesite?

- A. He is controlling.
- B. He fears the Indians.
- C. He cares about history.
- D. He doesn't want to build a house.

Do you think Robert and Kelsey should build on the burial ground? Explain.
